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## OBSERVATIONS ON THE FINN EPISODE

## 1. THE CONTENDING PARTIES

On one side we find the "Half Danes" (B. 1069), or "Danes" (1090, 1158), also loosely called *Scyldingas* (1069, 1108, 1154),<sup>1</sup> with their king Hnæf, Hōc's son,<sup>2</sup> and his chief thane Hengest. Other Danish warriors mentioned by name are Gūdlāf (1148, F. 16), Ōslāf (1148; called, more correctly, in the Fragment, l. 16: Ordlāf), Sigeferð of the tribe of the *Secgan* (F. 15, 24), Ēaha (F. 15), and Hūnlāfing (1143). Their enemies are the Frisians (1093, 1104) or *Ēotan*, i. e., "Jutes" (1072, 1088, 1141, 1145) under King Finn, Folcwalda's son, among whose retainers two only receive individual mention, namely Gārulf, son of Gūdlāf, (F. 18, 31, 33), and Gūðere (F. 18). Between the two parties stands Hildeburh, the wife of Finn (1153) and—as we gather from l. 1074 (and 1114, 1117)—sister of Hnæf.

The scene is in Friesland, at the residence of Finn.

It thus appears that the war is waged between a minor branch of the great Danish nation, the one which is referred to in Widsið by the term Hōcingas,<sup>3</sup> and which seems to have been associated with the tribe of the *Secgan*,<sup>4</sup> and the Frisians, i. e., according to the current view, the "East" Frisians between the Zuider Zee and the river Ems (and on the neighboring islands). The noteworthy interchangeable use of the names "Frisians" and "Jutes" shows that the Jutes, that is the West Germanic tribe which settled in Kent and adjacent parts (Beda, *H. E.* I, 15), were conceived of as quite closely related to the Frisians. This seems to be due to the fact that the Jutes had lived, at any rate for some time previous to their migration to Britain, in the vicinity of the Frisians.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cp. the inaccurate use of *Scyldingas* in the Heremōd episodes (913, 1710).

<sup>2</sup>Cp. 107, 1074, 1114, 1117.

<sup>3</sup>Wids. 28: *Hnæf* [wēold] *Hōcingum*.

<sup>4</sup>Or *Sycgan*; Wids. 31: *Sæferð* [wēold] *Sycgum*, cp. Finnsb. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Hoops, *Waldbäume und Kulturpflanzen im germ. Altertum*, p. 585; Jordan, *Verhandlungen der 49. Versammlung (1907) deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner*, 1908, pp. 138-40. See also Siebs, *P. Grdr.*<sup>2</sup> I, 1158, II<sup>2</sup>, 524; Einenkel, *Angl.* XXXV, 419.—A state of friction between the Jutes and the Danes is possibly hinted at in the first Heremōd episode of the Beowulf, l. 902.

As to the name of the Jutes, it is well known that they are called by Bede (*H. E.* I, 15; IV, 14 [16]): *Iuti, Iutae*; in OE.: Angl. *Ēote, Īote, (Iotan)*, IWS. *ȳte, ȳtan*. (Björkman, *E St.* XXXIX, 356 ff.; Chambers, *Widsith*, p. 237 ff.) Of the forms used in *Beowulf*, the gen. pl. *Ēotena* is entirely regular; the dat. pl. *Ēotenum* (instead of *Ēotum*) 1145 (also 902) is to be explained by the analogical influence of the gen. ending (cf. Sievers, *AgS. Grammatik*, §277, n. 1), unless it is due merely to scribal confusion with the noun *eotenas*. That really in all the instances the *eotenas* "giants," hence "enemies" (??) were meant (Rieger *et al.*), cannot be admitted.

Furthermore, the name of the Danish warrior *Ēaha* (by emendation: *Ēawa*) has been connected with the "Ingvaemonic" *Aviones* (Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 40).

However, neither "Frisians" nor "Danes" are mentioned in the Fragment. It has even been argued that the Danish nationality of *Hnæf* and *Hengest* is a *Beowulfian* innovation, and that the enemies of the Frisians (in history and legend) were really the *Chauci*, their eastern neighbors, or some other Ingvaemonic people. But the names *Gūþlāf*, *Ordlāf* (*Hūnlāfing*) certainly make us think of Danish tradition, since in Arngrim Jonnson's *Skjöldunga Saga* (ch. 4) the brothers *Hunleifus*, *Gunnleifus*, *Oddleifus* appear in the Danish royal line. (Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, p. 52, n.)

The point of view is distinctly—almost patriotically—Danish. The valor and loyalty of *Hnæf*'s retainers (in the Fragment), *Hildeburh*'s sorrow and *Hengest*'s longing for vengeance (in the Episode) are uppermost in the minds of the poets. It is not without significance, perhaps, that all the direct speech (in the Fragment) has been assigned to the Danes, whereas the utterances of the Frisians are reported as indirect discourse only. On the other hand, no concealment is made of the fact that the Jutes have shown bad faith (B. 1071 f.). The final attack on Finn and his men, culminating in the complete victory of the Danes, is regarded as the main point of the story in *Beowulf*. Certainly, the lines announcing the recital of the Finn story in the Danish royal hall: . . . .  
[be] *Finnes eaferum, ðā hāe se fār begeat* (1068) indicate clearly enough (by a characteristic anticipation) the victorious outcome: *swylce* . . . *Finn eft begeat/sweordbealo* 1146, *ðā wæs* . . .  
. . . *Fin slægen,/cýning on corþre*, 1151.

Finn himself, the husband of Hildeburh, plays such an insignificant part<sup>6</sup> that the term "Finn legend" is virtually a misnomer, though "The Fight at Finnsburg" is an appropriate enough title for the fragmentary poem such as we know it.

That there was an historical foundation for this recital of war-like encounters among Germanic coast tribes, we may readily believe. No definite event, however, is known to us that could have served as the immediate model. Taking the Beowulfian version at its full value, an actual parallel of a war between Geats ("Danes") and Frisians (and Franks) is supplied by the expedition of Chochilaicus (Hygelāc), which took place between the years 512 and 520. The identification of Hengest with his better known namesake, who together with his brother Horsa led the Jutes to Britain, has been repeatedly proposed;<sup>7</sup> but we should certainly expect a Jutish Hengest to have sided with the Frisians of our Finn tale. That the term *Ēotan* (i. e., Jutes) has been thought to refer to the Danish party (Hengest's party)<sup>8</sup> is indeed a basic error in all the argumentations along this line. The only way of saving the person of the historical Hengest in this connection would be to assume that the Anglo-Saxon version embodies two distinct strata of early legend reflecting different phases of the history of the Jutes, viz., the settlement of the tribe in Jutland, which naturally tended to link them to the Danes (hence Hengest's position) and, on the other hand, their sojourn in proximity to the Frisians (hence *Ēotan*=*Frȳsan*).

## 2. THE RÔLE OF HENGEST

After Hnæf's fall Hengest assumes command over the Danes and concludes a treaty with Finn. During the winter he stays with his men in Friesland. But deep in his heart burns the thought of revenge. The part played by him in the last act of the tragedy is somewhat obscure, since it is only vaguely alluded to in a few

<sup>6</sup>Just like Siggeir, the husband of Signý (Völsunga Saga) and Etzel, the husband of Kriemhilt (Nibelungenlied) in somewhat similar situations.—It almost looks as if Hildeburh herself directs the funeral rites (B. 1114 ff.).

<sup>7</sup>Thus, in recent times, by Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, p. 52; Clark Hall's *Translation*, 2nd ed., p. 180; Clarke, *Sidelights on Teutonic History during the Migration Period*, p. 185 ff.; Willy Meyer, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eroberung Englands durch die Angelsachsen* (Halle Diss., 1912).

<sup>8</sup>The impossibility of this view with regard to l. 1088 was insisted upon by Bugge, *Beitr.* XII, 37.

lines, which for years have proved one of the most troublesome passages of the entire poem: *Swā hē ne forwyrnde woroldrādenne, / þonne him Hūnlāfing hildelēoman* (or *Hildelēoman*), *billa sēlest on bearm dyde* (1142 ff.). I would propose the following rendering. "Under these circumstances" (or "in this frame of mind") he did not refuse [him, i. e., Hūnlāfing] the condition (stipulation), when Hūnlāfing placed the battle-flame (Battle-Flame), the best of swords, on his lap (gave it into his possession)." It should be noted that *forwyrnan* is regularly used with the dative of the person (expressed or, as in this case, implied) and the genitive of the thing asked for or insisted upon. As to *woroldrāden*, its second part, *rāden*, is not to be considered a mere derivative element (as in *camp-*, *fēond-*, *trēow-* *rāden*, etc.), but should be understood as the main semasiological element of a full compound, meaning "condition." The first element, *worold*, referring to something which is in accordance with the ordinary course of life, seems to be used (like *woruldmāgas*, Gen. 2178, *woruldnyt*, Gen. 960, 1016, *woruldman*, Met. Boeth. IV, 51, etc.) without any very distinctive meaning of its own, suggesting, however, Christian associations (*Angl.* XXXV, 116). In other words, Hūnlāfing (that is, Hūnlāf's son [Hall, *MLN.* XXV, 113 f.], and nephew of Gūplāf and Ōslāf) presents Hengest with a famous sword with the stipulation (or, on condition) [we now supply, by conjecture:] that the vengeance he is brooding over is to be carried into execution. Hengest accepts, and keeps his word. The *sweordbealo slīðen* which overtakes Finn, is presumably administered by Hūnlāfing's gift (1146 f., 1152).

### 3. A FEW TEXTUAL NOTES ARE SUBJOINED

a. The interpretation of l. 1068 advocated above presupposes the old punctuation of Heyne, which makes the Episode begin at l. 1069: *Hæleð Healf-Dena, Hnæf Scyldinga, / in Frēswæle feallan scolde*. This would leave the immediately preceding passage in the following shape: *þær wæs sang ond swæg . . . . ., gomenwudu grēted, gid oft wrecen, / ðonne healgamen Hrōþgāres scop / æfter medobence mēnan scolde, — / [be] Finnes eafterum, dā hīe se fār begeat*. That is to say, "many a song was recited," *gid oft wrecen* 1065<sup>b</sup> (Sievers, *Beitr.* XXIX, 571; also *Angl.* XXVII, 219, *MPh.* III, 249),<sup>9</sup> and then a definite specimen of the scop's repertory is exhibi-

<sup>9</sup>The combination of *manig* and *oft* appears, e. g., in the familiar passage from Bede: *ond for his leoþsongum monigra monna mōd oft tō worulde forhogdnisse . . . . . onbærnde wæron* 342. 9, = cuius carminibus multorum saepe animi ad contemtum saeculi . . . . . sunt . . . . . accensi.

ted in summary and paraphrase. It might seem that the author passes rather abruptly (l. 1068) to the new theme, leaving unexpressed the thought: "and thus he sang." However, this difficulty vanishes, if the phrase of l. 1065<sup>b</sup> be understood—as seems not improbable—in a more general sense: "there was plenty of entertainment by the scop" (or if *gid* be interpreted as part or "fit" of a lay). The insertion of *be* (Thorpe) in l. 1068: *be Finnes eaferum* "about Finn's men" or "about Finn and his men" (cp. *Hrēðlingas* 2960, *eaforum Ecgwelan* 1710) is after all more natural than the change to *eaferan* (*Bonner Beitr. z. Angl.* II, 183), though the latter would be quite possible stylistically (*Angl.* XXVIII, 443).

Of other modes of punctuation the one which makes the Episode (direct speech) begins at l. 1068: *Finnes eaferum* (. . . . . *Hnæf*. . . *feallan scolde*) (Ettmüller, Grein, etc.) suffers from the serious defect that the dative of (personal) agency "by Finn's men" is practically out of the question. It is true, a strong effort has recently been made to establish the use of this dative in Anglo-Saxon (A. Green, *The Dative of Agency* [1913], p. 95 ff., *J E G Ph.* XIII, 515 ff.), but the instances adduced are of questionable value and afford only very slender support. Moreover, such a rendering of ll. 1068-70 would be contradicted by the facts of the story, since it is the Danes, not the Frisians, who are overtaken by the sudden attack (*fær*)<sup>10</sup> leading to Hnæf's death—unless we take (with Grein and Bugge) *hæleð* as acc. pl., referring to *hīe*, which is certainly far-fetched. For the same reason we cannot agree with the punctuation adopted in the two latest German editions (and substantially identical with Thorpe's reading) which makes ll. 1069-70 the continuation of the subordinate clause introduced by *ðā*.

b. Ll. 1082-85. *þæt hē ne mehte on þām meðelstede/wīg Hengeste wiht gefeohtan,/nē þā wēalāfe wīge forþringan/þēodnes ðegne*. The construction *wīg Hengeste* . . . *gefeohtan*, though unusual (*Angl.* XXVIII, 443 f.), may perhaps just as well be retained: "he could not at all give fight to Hengest." It possibly receives support from Muspilli 76: *daz imo nioman kipāgan ni mak*. (Nibel. 98: *don kund im niht gestrūten/daz starke getwerc*.) The apparently redundant *wīg* serves as "cognate accusative," com-

<sup>10</sup>Cp. [*þā hyne*] *se fær begeat* 2230<sup>b</sup>, *ðā hyne wīg beget* 2872<sup>b</sup>, *þā hyne sio þrāg becwōm* 2883<sup>b</sup>.

parable to *rāde* in Ags. Chronicle, A. D. 871: *cyninges þegnas oft rāde onridon*. Clearly, the general sense of the passage is: "he could be successful neither in the offensive nor in the defensive."

c. Ll. 1121-22<sup>a</sup>. *bengeato burston, þonne blōd ætspranc, /lāðbite līces*. An accurate description (I am told) of what might easily happen during the initial stage of the heating of the bodies by the funeral fire. This realistic trait puts one in mind of Scandinavian narrative and is paralleled, in fact, by a similar, though a good deal more repulsive observation cited by Alexander Bugge, *Vikingerne* I, 142 from an old Chronicle (ed. by O'Donovan), and which in a German translation (Olrík, *Nordisches Geistesleben in heidnischer und frühchristlicher Zeit*, p. 74) reads as follows:

"Einmal hatten drüben in Irland die Dänen und Norweger um die Herrschaft gestritten, und die Dänen hatten gesiegt. Irische Sendboten, die nach der Schlacht zu ihnen kamen, sahen, wie sie Feuer zum Bereiten des Mahles zwischen den Leichen angezündet und den Bratspiess in den toten Körpern befestigt hatten; durch das Feuer platzten nun diese Leichen, so dass die Eingeweide herausfielen. 'Weshalb tut ihr etwas so Hässliches?' sagten die Iren. 'Weshalb sollten wir es nicht?' sagten die Dänen; 'hätten die and eren gesiegt, so hätten sie das Gleiche mit uns getan.' "

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